

# Our Vital Need: More Business in Government

By A. R. PINCI

ORGANIZED inefficiency is what exists at Washington under the name of government. The government's inability in managing itself in a businesslike way is nothing new, and just now, because of President Harding's interest in the matter, is very much before public attention. But unscientific management of and by the administration is not, be it understood, an exclusively American characteristic. Other governments are alien to the science of management. The only difference between this country and other countries is that the American people can, if they insist, improve the situation which disgusts them, especially when taxes fall due, after which they forget all about it.

Waste, extravagance, overstaffing and duplication are the four principal governmental weeds in that perennial crop that Uncle Sam so carelessly cultivates year after year. From the day when the late Senator Aldrich declared that the government could save \$300,000,000 a year to the recent day when Senator Ashurst raised the total—probably to keep up the ratio with increased costs—to \$2,000,000 a day, exactly ten years have intervened, but the only ones who have profited by these warnings have been the campaigners, some of whom have been animated by the best of intentions and not a few by the desire for a subject suitable for the stump. It is so uncompromising and glib that the middle class does not realize that it is synonymous with *mañana*.

The problem is not new; it has no party. It is unnecessary to trace back its origin and constant variations. Suffice it to say that it exists. Its complexities, unfortunately, have been magnified by the lens of politics in a patronage shutter. It has led to the creation of miscellaneous commissions, boards and agencies that have been little more than ornamental. Discussion has yielded at times some good plans which, unfortunately, clashed with the intent of other parties at interest. As a result the feeble attempts at betterment have proved abortive. Attention has been given to auxiliary instead of primary questions. Every plan has involved the cardinal unwritten necessity to protect the personnel. In fact, every attempted solution has been based upon personnel instead of organization. The futility of this course can better be understood when it is realized that a problem involving the distribution and allocation of a hundred and odd bureaus is considered instead a problem of the government clerk, as the Federal employe has come to be known.

Both major political parties sermonized in accordance with strict campaign etiquette last year. The writer was assured of vigorous action on the part of both candidates and publicly quoted them accordingly. Both having been members of Congress they regarded the question with legislative equanimity. But this equanimity is an imaginative state, easily overcome by the "know how-ers."

President Harding, himself an advocate of system in reason, wants to reorganize the government departments on an efficient basis. If his chosen assistants do not interpose any obstacles, which would be superhuman on their part, he can bring it about in no time. President Harding, like other Presidents before him facing the same problem, lost control of the situation by following the ancient custom of relying upon his executive assistants to get together and bring about the official millennium.

This is no actual cause for complaint. Regardless of just who it has been until now—and who it will be from now on—to obstruct the good work, and that everybody has been willin', it never happens that everybody would be in accord at one time on any one plan. It is to be expected that no man, be he the discoverer of efficiency even, is going to amputate his own department in favor of another.

Take the complex situation created by the need for a better understanding of our foreign trade problems. It was under President Taft that international commerce definitely assumed official importance. The De-

partment of Commerce and Labor was established during Roosevelt's first term, and it remained a Siamese-twin sort of department until President Wilson's administration performed some excellent surgery. Meanwhile the department, little more than a statistical organization, did not concern itself with such imaginary questions as foreign trade. Foreign trade was not fashionable, not even to talk about. Secretary Knox invited much criticism by making the first plunge, and this was accompanied by the appointment of foreign trade advisors in the Department of State, of which he was chief.

Today there are or there is a trade advisor, and there are similar officials with other titles under the Department of Commerce. Both departments have, during the last eight years, engaged in a more or less silent war. Though to all intents and purposes the Wilson administration turned its back upon the dollar diplomacy of its predecessor, and apparently did so by relieving the State Department of its responsibility over foreign trade matters, the Department of Commerce began to experiment in this field, and the World War and the attending excitement made these experiments grow.

With the end of the war, however, Secretary Lansing, realizing that if the background of economics were eliminated foreign relations would not warrant the retention of the State Department, contended with his colleague of the Department of Commerce authority over the commercial attachés and the supervision of their work. Secretary Alexander refused to yield, and the matter was not stirred during the interim of 1920.

This problem, however, was inherited by the Harding administration. The business men concerned with this particular phase of governmental activities, as well as the few correspondents at Washington familiar with the genesis of this mix-up, ignored entirely the suggestion that this or that man could or would solve the difficulty. To say that it has been eliminated or that it will be to be optimistic—too much so. Neither Secretary Hughes nor Secretary Hoover, nor other secretaries or chairmen of executive and administrative commissions and boards having some jurisdiction over international economic needs, could by themselves, despite the best of intentions, correct the situation.

In fact, it may be taken for granted that an ideal, or nearly ideal Federal office reorganization will never be accomplished except by a President-elect before making his nominations, said nominations subject to his own theory of reallocation. President Harding could have worked out on paper—and as Senator the data was at his disposal—a chart involving the new plan, subject, of course, to modification and trial.

It is not just to say that Congress obstructs. Congress as a body will not obstruct if a President knows what he wants. Congressmen may impede for a while, but never in any policy which has the weight of public opinion behind it, as has Federal reorganization. Never passes a day that some member does not arraign or ridicule this or that bureau, and at appropriation time he makes his word good by voting to legislate out, yet in the course of interminable hearings before committees an unimportant officer of the doomed bureau is called to testify. Upon this testimony really depends his job, and eloquence at such times rises to zenith. Many a committee member unable to declaim as well on the floor, has envied the forensic brilliance of a witness thinking of his job, and his job alone. Think of the Congressmen at campaign time!

The reason that these bureaus succeed in perpetuating themselves is traceable to the President's attitude. I am speaking of the office, and of course of four or five administrations whose operations have come to my personal attention.

The President's indifference may be a loophole; again, it may be the secretary in charge who, scenting an emergency and fearful because of the threatened dismemberment of his composite organization, writes a letter or appears in person. Congress, because of the force of patronage, eventually yields.

If the President having decided upon effectuating a reorganization, were to submit to Congress a definite plan, the request would not be denied, because so far as the country is concerned, the advantages would all be on the President's side, with Congress or lesser officials on the defensive.

A precedent existed—a war precedent, it is true—in the Overman bill, by which President Wilson was given absolute authority to reorganize the government departments, commissions, bureaus, boards, in any way he pleased. But nothing came of it, though enduring fame would have been his in this case no less than for his other ideals. Instead, numerous war organizations, most of which have since become "reconstruction" offices, were added to an already topheavy, heterogeneous organization with resultant confusion.

It would be too much perhaps to expect the President himself to devise final plans for a reorganization, yet unless he alone decides to formulate them and rush them through, he will never succeed in squaring a party and platform promise with fulfillment. This is a cynical observation born of long experience at Washington where, for instance, to trace a given bit of news it is necessary to visit several offices which ought to be one office, because their work is practically triplicated or worse. The trained correspondent becomes inured to these givogations, but not so the business man. Thus we may explain the impossibility of team work between the business world and the government.

Briefly, while every official is sympathetic toward reorganization, his willingness is that the experiment be tried first on the other fellow. As long as the proposal carries with it the implication of diminished authority, executive officials are bound "to view with alarm."

Yet reapportionment by itself would not eliminate difficulties. It goes deeper than that. It is necessary to make many important changes in consonance with modern exigencies. The nation has grown so rapidly that the government has not kept pace with it.

This country has never emerged from its related railroad and shipping problem. Today it is more serious than ever. The railroads and our deteriorating merchant marine, which together constitute about \$25,000,000,000 of property investment of vital nature, to say nothing of a million or so stockholders, have no representation in the President's cabinet. They form a constant emergency, but neither of which ever is brought to the President's attention except indirectly. Whenever railroads and merchant marine are discussed at a Cabinet meeting it is without the participation of railroad or shipping experts, but through disinterested secretaries as spokesmen. Thus our most costly property investments are separately permitted to drift along under the jurisdiction of independent commissions (frequently without experts because these are often barred by the organic acts of Congress) that, so far as records show to date, have never satisfactorily overcome difficulties. In between is sandwiched an occasional Congressional investigation, that as soon as completed is overtaken by new troubles.

This, of course, does not mean that a single departmental head could manage transportation affairs better than scattered commissions, but under the present system there follows a hodge-podge of legislative, executive and judicial duties that never dovetail and serve to keep our transportation properties in turmoil. It is evident, therefore, that as much of our national wealth—the very nucleus of that greater wealth represented by other departments—is entitled to the benefit of the President's attention at the Cabinet meetings by

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## Reorganization Proposed to Improve the Business of Government

This chart gives an idea of the changes proposed for the departments in our national government. It does not name, however, bureaus not subject to transfer, and all names that are in parentheses are those of the departments now holding jurisdiction.

STATE	TREASURY	ARMY	NAVY
Insular Affairs (War)	War Credits Board (War)	Soldiers' Home (Ind.)	Coast Guard (Tre.)
International Joint Commission (Ind.)	Federal Reserve Board (Ind.)		
Boundary Commission, Canada (Ind.)	War Finance Corporation (Ind.)		
Boundary Commission, Mexico (Ind.)	Farm Loan Board (Ind.)		
INTERIOR	JUSTICE	AGRICULTURE	COMMERCE
Federal Power Com. (Ind.)	Com'r. Prohibition (Treas.)	Bureau Fisheries (Comm.)	War Trade Board (State)
Forest Service (Agr.)	Secret Service (Treas.)		Tariff Commission (Ind.)
Naval Observatory (Navy)	Alien Prop. Cust. (Ind.)		Patent Office (Inter.)
Weather Bureau (Agr.)	Bureau Naturalization (Lab.)		Federal Trade Com. (Ind.)
Coast Geodetic Survey (Com.)			Bureau Markets (Agr.)
Public Bldgs. Grnds. (War)			xBureau Chemistry (Agr.)
Comm. Fine Arts (Ind.)			
LABOR	POST OFFICE	TRANSPORTATION	PUBLIC WELFARE
*Civil Service Comm. (Ind.)		U. S. Shipping Board (Ind.)	Bureau Public Health (Treas.)
*U. S. Employees Compstn. Comm. (Ind.)		Int. Commerce Com. (Ind.)	zPension Bureau (Int.)
*Bureau Efficiency (Ind.)		Engr. Bd. Rivers & Harbors (War)	zWar Risk Ins. (Treas.)
vMediation & Conciliation Bd. (Ind.)		Inland & Coastwise Wtrways Serv. (War)	Bureau Education (Int.)
		Bureau Public Roads (Agr.)	Census (Commerce)
		Bureau Navigation (Comm.)	Children's Bureau (Labor)
		Hydrographic Office (Navy)	Women's Bureau (Labor)
		Lighthouse Bureau (Comm.)	American Red Cross (Ind.)
		Steamboat Inspection (Comm.)	Miscellaneous Hospitals

\*Should be one bureau.

vTo absorb identical bureau in Department of Labor.

zShould be combined into Bureau of Pensions.

xShould be combined with Bureau of Standards.

The foregoing is necessarily sketchy, and does not go into all the fine points and distinctions of the offices suggested for transfer, but their possibilities have been taken into account, and no challenge of dissent made tenable. If a further division is warranted it is not such as to involve difficulties.

The new departments are indispensable, because if the activities reasonably theirs should be distributed among existing departments more chaos would ensue.